



## Position Paper: Diaspora Contribution

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**Committee: CPD**

**Topic: Migration and development Diaspora Voices**

**Organization: Himilo Relief Development association (HIRDA)**

**Delegate: Fatumo Farah Director HIRDA**

As the President of the UN High Level Dialogue of the General Assembly on Migration & Development in 2006 emphasized, migration has indeed become “a key component of development in both developing and developed countries.” While these could not replace development, remittances both social and financial have been seen as beneficial not only in improving the lives of millions of migrant families, but also in providing a “positive effect on the economy and social development at large.” However, the Diaspora is still not taken seriously as a full partner in development while there are enormous financial and intellectual opportunities for development. It is a missed opportunity now there are considerable cutbacks in development cooperation; we need to focus on money and resources that are at hands and how we can better utilize these.

Development aid is changing. There are more and more new non-traditional development factors that contribute to development and thus to achieving the MDGs. Migrants and non-traditional development actors have made tremendous contributions to the development of their country of origin. MDGs such poverty reduction (MDG 1) and improving sexual reproductive health of the local population (MDG 5 and 6) are directly funded by Diaspora. They do this is by sending remittances, facilitating trade and investing in the home country, performing volunteer work and transfer knowledge, skills, and expertise they have acquired in the host country. Furthermore, they promote repatriation and Diaspora tourism. According to World Bank fact book 2001, the total amount the Diaspora worldwide has sent to the country of origin in 2011 was estimated at \$ 325 billion. This is compared to \$ 133.5 billion development assistance (ODA) from donor countries an enormous amount. However, because migrants are not recognized as a serious partner in the fight against poverty alleviation they often operate in isolation leaving their contributions to the achievement of the MDGs often unnoticed.

For instance for the past 15 years, HIRDA has been active in numerous projects, ranging from setting up vocational schools to human rights promotion, including sexual reproductive health right. HIRDA has been campaigning since 2005 fighting against female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage and girls' education.

FGM is the practice of partially or completely removing the female external genitalia, or in some way injuring the female genital organs, for cultural reasons. It is still a deeply rooted tradition in Somalia and in some countries in Asia and the Middle East, despite years of international efforts to end the practice. Estimates suggest that still 100-140 million girls and women around the world today have been mutilated. FGM can have devastating health and social consequences.

Early marriage is in Somalia often justified with cultural, traditional, or religious arguments. Moreover, poverty often plays a strong role in family decision-making. The majority of Somali girls marry before the age of 18 leading to serious health consequences for the child as early sexual activity-often with limited access to contraception; health services or health information- can lead to

repeated pregnancies and childbirth before girls are physically and psychologically ready. HIRDA is raising awareness, organizing dialogue within the community for early marriage consequences, and provide girls the opportunity for education, as we believe that education can support them in protecting themselves.

This is a good example of how the Diaspora can provide a space for the (re)negotiation of gender roles, rights, and practices family planning, safe sex, HIV/AIDS, and prevention of and protection from female genital mutilation (FGM). Their background, commitment and the skills that the Diaspora have gained from their host country enables them to educate local actors on and address sensitive matters.

Diaspora plays an important role in the realization of the MDGs and they continue to contribute also to the post-2015 agenda. The recognition of the Diaspora as a serious global partner is a prerequisite for the pursuit of a world without poverty: more focus on migration and development means a more efficient and effective use of development resources. Migrants are still "untapped resource" so post-2015 agenda offers the opportunity to include them in formulating and shaping of concrete goals for effective poverty reduction.